



COMMUNITY COLLEGE
OF RHODE ISLAND

Dear CCRI Students/Parents,

This letter is to inform you about meningococcal disease which is a bacterial infection commonly referred to as meningitis. Although getting the meningitis vaccine is not mandatory for all CCRI students, it is the responsibility of CCRI Health Services to provide you with information about the disease and the availability of vaccine.

Bacterial (not viral) meningitis is a rare but potentially fatal illness. When it strikes, its' flu-like symptoms difficult (fever, **severe** headache, stiff neck, rash, nausea, vomiting, lethargy) make diagnosis. If not treated early, meningitis can lead to swelling of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal column as well as severe and permanent disabilities. These include hearing loss, brain damage, seizures, limb amputation and even death.

Cases of meningitis among teens and young adults 15 to 24 years of age have more than doubled since 1991. The disease strikes about 3,000 Americans each year and claims about 300 lives. Between 100 and 125 meningitis cases occur on college campuses (usually residential) and as many as 15 college students die from the disease annually. It usually occurs as a single, isolated event. The disease is spread through the air via droplets of respiratory secretions and direct contact with an infected person. Direct contact is defined in this case as oral contact with shared items such as cigarettes, drinking glasses or kissing. Casual contact as might occur in a regular classroom, office or factory setting is not usually significant enough to cause concern. In the event of a significant exposure to an infected person, individuals are treated preventatively with an oral antibiotic.

A vaccine is available that protects against four types of the bacteria that cause meningitis in the United States – types A, C, Y and W-135. These types account for nearly two-thirds of meningitis against the most common strains of the disease including serotypes A, C and W-135. The vaccine has shown to be 85 to 100 percent effective in serogroups A and C in older children and adults. Adverse reactions to the vaccine are mild and infrequent, consisting primarily of redness and pain, at the site of injection, lasting up to two days.

CCRI Health Services does not provide the vaccine at this time. Contact your private health care provider, nearest walk-in or community health center to obtain the vaccine if desired. The cost of the vaccine without insurance coverage is approximately \$60 to \$100.

To find more information about the disease, search the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/bdmd/diseaseinfo.

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